



‘Go Red’
focuses
on heart

LOCAL, 3A

VENTURA COUNTY STAR

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Local man admits role aiding Russians

Lawyer says he didn’t know of meddling

Megan Diskin
Ventura County Star
USA TODAY NETWORK

A Santa Paula man has pleaded guilty to unknowingly helping the Russians interfere with the 2016 presidential election when he used an online ser-

vice to sell bank account information to the foreign nationals.

Richard Pinedo entered the plea as part of an agreement with authorities filed Monday in federal court. Documents related to the case were released on the U.S. Department of Justice’s website under Special Counsel Robert

Mueller’s investigation.

The news of Pinedo’s plea came Friday as federal prosecutors announced an indictment against 13 Russians and a Russian organization in connection with the alleged plot to “sow discord in the U.S. political system,” the indictment states.

For several months, allegations swirled that foreign nationals had meddled in the election, but Friday’s devel-

opment in the ongoing investigation marked the first formal accusation by the U.S. government against Russia.

“By in or around May 2014, the organization’s strategy included interfering with the 2016 U.S. presidential election, with the stated goal of ‘spread[ing] distrust towards the candidates and the political system in general,’” according

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Shortfall at VCMC stirs call for audit

Kathleen Wilson
Ventura County Star
USA TODAY NETWORK

Taxpayer advocates have asked for an independent forensic audit of the county health system, saying they don’t see how a projected loss of \$20 million reported in November could have swung to the deficit of \$2.4 million disclosed this week.

Bob Alviani, president of the Ventura County Taxpayers Association, told a hospital oversight committee Wednesday that the Ventura County Board of Supervisors should order and control the review.

He called for the audit to be completed outside the control of the county Health Care Agency, the large entity that oversees Ventura County Medical Center, Santa Paula Hospital and a battery of clinics.

After a five-week review of the medical system’s fiscal situation, the

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Ventura County Medical Center is pictured. KATHLEEN WILSON/THE STAR

Volunteers rallying to save island’s oaks



The native Oak trees high above the beaches of Santa Rosa Island in an area where a fog-fed moisture harvesting system exists. PHOTOS BY JUAN CARLO/THE STAR

Vegetation on Santa Rosa coming back despite odds

Cheri Carlson Ventura County Star | USA TODAY NETWORK

Kathryn McEachern stood on a high ridge on Santa Rosa Island staring at a stand of rare oak trees.

Centuries old, the island oaks seemed to just barely hang on to the steep, barren hillside on the island, part of the Channel Islands National Park and about 40 miles off Ventura. Their gnarled roots curved and twisted several feet above ground.

The plan was to protect the oaks by trying to restore the thick brush that had blanketed the hillsides along

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The leaves of the native Oak trees are growing high above the beaches of Santa Rosa Island. The native vegetation is coming back unassisted in many places.

Flu may have damaged teen’s heart, coroner says

Tom Kiskan
Ventura County Star
USA TODAY NETWORK

Gabriella Chabot texted her father from La Reina High School a week ago Thursday to tell him she didn’t feel well. She wanted to go home.

The ninth-grader who could be sassy and sweet almost simultaneously left the Catholic girls school in Thousand



Gabriella Chabot

Oaks with her mother and returned to their Simi Valley residence. She took ibuprofen because her ribs felt sore, likely from the influenza B virus that had emerged more than a week earlier.

She told her mother, Janice Chabot, she thought sleeping would help.

Later, “my wife checked on her. She was gone. She wasn’t breathing,” said Michael Chabot on Thursday, a day before his daughter would have celebrated her 15th birthday.

Gabriella was rushed to a hospital, Adventist Health Simi Valley, with her mother and brother following in a police car. Her father raced to join them from his Westlake Village mortgage lending office.

At the hospital, where the family waited with a chaplain, hope emerged when it appeared a light heartbeat had been detected.

After an eternity that may have lasted 20 minutes, the news came.

“The doctor just said, ‘We did everything we could, but I’m sorry she passed away,’” said Michael Chabot. “Now, it’s

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USA TODAY

Special counsel Robert Mueller charges 13 Russians over election-meddling. 8A

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